

Message Text

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12
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TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1483
AMCONSUL CALCUTHA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

S E C R E T DACCA 3823

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, BV, IN
SUBJ: NAC AND INDO-BANGLADESH PROBLEMS

REF: NEW DELHI 10819

1. ON THE QUESTION OF RAISING FARAKKA AND POSSIBLY OTHER INDO-BANGLADESH PROBLEMS AT COLOMBO, MFA OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED DOUBT ABOUT THE WISDOM OF SUCH A MOVE. IN DISCUSSING COLOMBO WITH THE DCM JULY 26, A.M. CHOUDHURY, THE ADDITIONAL FOREIGN SECRETARY, REMARKED THAT THE BDG WAS NOT AT ALL SURE IT WISHED TO RAISE SUCH ISSUES. CHOUDHURY SAID THAT BANGLADESH DID HAVE "TWO OUTSTANDING ISSUES WITH OUR LARGE NEIGHBOR" BUT THOUGHT THAT IT MIGHT BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO RAISE THEM IN THE NON-ALIGNED CONTEXT FOR TWO REASONS: INDIA IS A LEADER OF THE NAM, AND IT IS HOPED THAT THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY AMONG THE NMN-ALIGNED WOULD PREVAIL AT COLOMBO. IF BANGLADESH WERE TO RAISE CONTENTIOUS BILATERAL ISSUES, HE IMPLIED, IT MIGHT SEEM OUT OF PLACE AND IN EFFECT PROVE DETRIMENTAL TO THE BDG'S CAUSE.

2. REAZ RAHMAN, DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, MADE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME POINTS TO EMBOFFS. RAHMAN, WHO IS PREPARING THE INITIAL DRAFT OF PRESIDENT SAYEM'S SPEECH FOR COLOMBO, VOLUNTEERED THE INFORMATION THAT ONE

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OF HIS DIFFICULTIES IS THE APPROACH TO TAKE ON FARAKKA.

DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION HAD TO BE SATISFIED, RAHMAN SAID, BUT HE DID NOT REALLY CONSIDER THE NAM A FORUM IN WHICH TO RAISE THE ISSUE, BOTH BECAUSE OF ITS COMPLEXITY AND BECAUSE NO NON-ALIGNED MEETING WOULD TAKE SIDES AGAINST INDIA. AT BEST, HE SAID, BANGLADESH COULD HOPE (A) TO GAIN SOME UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE NAM FOR ITS POSITION, (B) PERHAPS TO SUGGEST THAT THE FINAL RESOLUTION OF EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF GANGES WATERS WOULD REQUIRE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND (C) TO ELICIT THE OFFER OF GOOD OFFICES FOR AN AMICABLE SETTLEMENT.

3. BOTH CHOUDHURY AND RAHMAN SAY THAT THE DECISION TO RAISE BILATERAL ISSUES HAS YET TO BE TAKEN, BUT THE FACT THAT FARAKKA IS BEING INCLUDED IN THE INITIAL DRAFT OF SAYEM'S SPEECH INDICATES TO US THAT AT LEAST SOME AMONG THE BDG HIERARCHY AT THIS STAGE ARE ARGUING, IF NOT DIRECTING, THAT FARAKKA SHOULD BE MENTIONED, IF ONLY IN PASSING, AT COLOMBO.
BOSTER

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